

Lisa Martin, Interests, Power and Multilateralism

Martin focuses on four problems of cooperation and the potential role of multilateralism in helping states overcome these problems. Collaboration, coordination, suasion, and assurance. Each of these problems presents states with unique challenges. Why do we have alternative institutional solutions? What is the instrumental value of patterns of multilateralism under different configurations of state interests?

- Collaboration problems contain strong incentives to defect from cooperation, since defection results in immediate payoffs. Mechanisms of cooperation must focus on maintenance of agreements: significant role for formal organizations, extensive monitoring, specific reciprocity or direct retaliation, compromise of multilateral principles, delegation.
- Coordination games, where the problem is to help states settle on a particular outcome, do not require institutions with strong mechanisms for surveillance and enforcement: no state would gain by deviating from the established outcome. We may expect formal organizations to be rather superfluous: but there is the issue of transaction costs on the collection of information about state intentions, information about future plans.
- In a suasion game the hegemon who is willing to provide public goods must persuade or coerce others to cooperate. Equilibrium outcomes leave one actor dissatisfied: the appearance of multilateralism may be quite important to conceal hegemonic pressure: secretive international organizations, specific reciprocity, little role for multilateral norms, linking of issues that facilitate persuasion.
- In assurance games all players will have strong incentives to cooperate as long as others players do not defect. The problem is simply one of assuring all players that each sees no benefits from unilateral defection and is in control of domestic policymaking: exchange of information but little need for complex institutional arrangements.

Now, although we can rule out certain kinds of solutions for each type of cooperation problem, more than one potential solution usually remains, and the consideration of the structural characteristics of the international system proves to be necessary (783-89). Also, what factors are likely to upset a pattern of cooperation established under certain configurations of interests and power (789-791)?